

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00324 261705Z

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

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S E C R E T BEIRUT 0324

EXDIS

FROM CHARGE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS, LE, SY, XF

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: TALK WITH KAMAL AL-ASSAD, SPEAKER OF LEBANESE
PARLIAMENT

REF: (A) AMMAN 379, (B) STATE 15004, (C) AMMAN 423

1. I CALLED ON LEBANESE PARLIAMENT SPEAKER KAMAL AL-ASSAD
ON JAN 26 TO CARRY OUT INSTRUCTIONS PARA 2, REF B.
APPOINTMENT HAD BEEN SCHEDULED PRIOR TO ASF MOVE SOUTH FROM
JAZZIN. ASSAD SAID HE HAD NOT REPEAT NOT RECEIVED AMBASSADOR
PICKERING'S RESPONSE VIA LEBA AMB SOLH IN AMMAN (REF C).

2. IN DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM OF SOUTHERN LEBANON, ASSAD
REPEATED MANY OF THE POINTS THAT HE MADE TO AMBASSADOR
PICKERING (REF A). HE SAID HTOSE WHO SAY THAT
LEBANESE FORCES SHOULD BE USED TO ESTABLISH SECURITY IN
THE SSUTH ARE REALLY SAYING THAT THINGS SHOULD REMAIN AS
THEY ARE SINCE ANYONE FAMILIAR WITH THE PROBLEM KNOWS
THAT THERE IS NO SUITABLE LEBANESE FORCE AVAILABLE.
ASSAD REPEATED THAT THERE IS COMPLETE DISORDER IN THE

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SOUTH AND THAT IN HIS VIEW THE PRESENT SITUATION IS
WORSE THAN ANY POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE. THE PALESTINIANS,
THE IRAQIS, THE COMMUNISTS (WHO RE FEW BUT WELL
ORGANIZED), AND THE PPS ARE ALL CREATING HAVOC IN THE
REGION. (ASSAD'S HOUSE IN HIS HOME VILLAGE OF TAIBI
HAS BEEN DESTROYED BY THESE ELEMENTS.) THE LEBANESE
CHRISTIAN ARMY OF HANNA SAID AND THE LAA OF AHMAD

KHATIB ARE POLARIZING PEOPLE ON A SECTARIAN BASIS AND CREATING CONFESSIONALISM WERE NON EXISTED BEFORE. ASSAAD SAID THAT THE ISRAELIS WERE ENCOURAGING THIS GROWING CONFESSIONALISM AND EXPLOITING THE CHAOTIC SITUATION FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES. HE DISCOUNTED THE RECENT MOVE OF ASF TROOPS FROM JAZZIN TOWARDS NABATIYAH AS A SMALL STEP AND SAID THEY WOULD HAVE TO GO STILL FURTHER SOUTH IF ORDER WAS TO BE RESTORED.

3. I REPEATED USG VIEW THAT WHILE WE ARE FULLY AWARE OF THE PROBLEM, ANY FURTHER MOVEMENT OF ARAB SECURITY FORCE ELEMENTS TOWARDS THE SOUTH WOULD ENTAIL A SERIOUS RISK OF ISRAELI RESPONSE, CITING PRESS COMMENTS ON JAN 24 ASF MOVES BROADCAST BY RADIO JERUSALEM THIS MORNING AS AN EXAMPLE. USG WAS SEEKING A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE OVERALL MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM AND PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS ON LEBANESE-ISRAELI FRONTIER WOULD THREATEN THIS PROCESS. NEW USG ADMINISTRATION NEEDED TIME TO ASSESS THE PROBLEM AND SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE. ABOVE ALL, WE WANTED NO MORE SURPRISES. ASSAD RECOGNIZED USG CONCERNS AND THAT OUR ASSESSMENTS OF WHAT SHOULD BE DONE MIGHT DIFFER, BUT INSISTED THAT IN HIS OPINION ANY CHANGE IN THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH WOULD BE FOR THE BETTER.

4. COMMENT: THE SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTHERN LEBANON HAS BEEN GETTING STEADILY WORSE. BOTH THE IMAM MUSA SADR AND THE MARONITE PAARTRIARCH HAVE TOLD ME DURING THE PAST WEEK THAT THEY CANNOT TRAVEL SAFELY IN THIS AREA, AND THE BISHOP OF TYRE FACES THE SAME DANGERS. AS THE
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TOP LEBANESE POLITICAL FIGURE FROM THE SOUTH AND A LEADER OF THE SHIITE COMMUNITY, SPEAKER ASSAD HAS ASSUMED THE ROLE OF SPOKESMAN FOR THOSE WHO FEEL STRONGLY THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE TO ESTABLISH ORDER IN THIS REGION.
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